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Basics of a cover letter

The cover letter provides an opportunity for you to introduce yourself and exhibit your value to the company. In addition, this is your opportunity to showcase your knowledge about the organization and why you are the best candidate.

**Do’s**

* Personalize each letter. Think in terms of quality, not quantity. Show the employer you have researched the company. Generic letters and templates have less chance of getting you an interview.
* Keep it short and to the point. Remember, an employer may read hundreds of cover letters. Make yours count!
* Make sure your letter has no grammatical or spelling errors. Employers regularly mention that these errors create a poor first impression.
* Try to address your letter to a specific person, even if it means calling the organization to get that information.
  + Avoid opening phrases, such as “To whom it may concern,” “Dear Gentlemen” or “Dear Sirs.”
* Use buzzwords or keywords from the job description (e.g., collaborated, trained, etc.).

**Don’ts**

* Be overly humorous or pushy.
* Use too many “I” statements. (*Utilize actions verbs instead*.)
* Present unrealistic capabilities, such as “I have no weaknesses and can accomplish everything.”

This chart is designed to help you organize your qualities, experiences and accomplishments as they relate to a position of interest. Use the job description to complete the chart below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| List three traits sought in a candidate.  (e.g., strong presentation skills) | List three phrases describing how those traits were used by you while working.  (e.g., lead speaker at regional meeting) |
| 1. | 1. |
| 2. | 2. |
| 3. | 3. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| List three job duties/responsibilities.  (e.g., complete department inventory audits) | List an achievement related to each duty.  (e.g., recorded data in excel spreadsheet regarding inventory) |
| 1. | 1. |
| 2. | 2. |
| 3. | 3. |
| List three facts about the organization or mission of the organization.  (e.g., serves 800,000 clients over 140 countries) | List why you find that fact appealing.  (e.g., business serves diverse small businesses and large businesses) |
| 1. | 1. |
| 2. | 2. |
| 3. | 3. |

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**CONTENT OF A COVER LETTER**

Regardless of what type of cover letter you are writing, the basic format is the same. Use the formula below as a general guideline for all cover letters.

1. **Opening** **Paragraph**
   1. Expresses your interest in the position and focuses on the organization
   2. Tells where you heard about the organization or position
   3. Demonstrates your knowledge of the organization or field
2. **Body**
   1. Highlights a few major points of your background
   2. Focuses on you
   3. Illustrates how your qualifications match their needs
3. **Closing**
   1. Summarizes how you would fit the organization
   2. Requests action; asks for an interview or an application
   3. Suggests a date that you will call to follow up (*Be* *sure* *to* *follow* *up* *during* *that* *period*.)

Your Street Address

City, ST 00000

Month Day, YYYY

Contact’s Name

Contact’s Title (*Start here if contact name is unknown.*)

Organization Name

Street Address

City, ST 00000

Dear Mr. Smith, (*Use “Dear Personnel Director” if contact name is unknown*.)

This letter is an expression of my interest in the Personal Banker position listed on the Bank of America website. As I researched Bank of America, I was drawn to your value of treating each client and teammate as an individual and treating every moment as one that matters. I too believe strongly in delivering a complete customer service approach when dealing with clients’ financial goals, and I feel I would be a great fit for your organization.

My education and past job experience relate extremely well to the marketing, finance and customer service aspects of the Personal Banker position. For example, as an intern with Security Federal Bank, I consistently dealt with the analyzing and reporting of financial data. Several of the reports I participated in creating went directly to the Board of Directors. Additionally, my position as Vice President of Communications with Alpha Omicron Pi has given me a strong background in marketing. Through duties such as creating flyers for the campus and communicating with the national headquarters, I have been exposed to many different aspects of publicity. This experience would relate well to the skills needed to be successful at Bank of America.

Undoubtedly, one of my biggest strengths is my desire to always provide excellent customer service. Both my banking and restaurant positions had a strong emphasis on customer service, with the success of the organization being contingent on returning customers. At Outback, I was given the responsibility of handling customer problems and complaints. That duty is only handled by individuals who communicate well and understand the importance of building relationships with customers.

I believe I have the characteristics required to be a successful employee at Bank of America. I would welcome the opportunity to learn your organization, from the ground up, through the Personal Banker position. If I haven’t heard from you, I will contact you the week of February 21st to further discuss my candidacy. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

\*\*Leave 3-4 blank lines then type name. On a printed document, sign your name in this space.

Firstname M. Lastname\*\*\*